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THE MISSING PAGES OF AN OLD ARABIC ANTHOLOGY.

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Abu Bekr Mohammed ibn Ja'far ibn Aḥmed ibn el-Ḥosain es-Sarrāj lived in Bagdad, and died in the year 500 A. H. (1106 A. D.). According to Ibn Ḥallikān, he was one of the most learned men of his time, a noted *ḥāfiẓ* and teacher of tradition. He was also a poet of no mean rank, as appears both from his reputation among his contemporaries and from the specimens of his poetry which have been preserved. He seems to have been the author of several works;¹ but the one by which he was best known to the literary world, and the only one which has survived to the present day, is the anthology to which he gave the name

كتاب مصارع العشاق.

This title, *Maṣāri' al-'Uṣṣāq*, "The Places Where Lovers Have Met Their Fate," comes much nearer to indicating the nature of the book than is the case with most Arabic titles. That which es-Sarrāj has given us here is a collection of stories of loves and lovers, gathered from the classical and popular traditions of the Arabic-speaking world. All of the favorites of old Arabian story are here: Tauba (or Majnūn) and his Laila, 'Urwa and 'Afrā, Qais ibn Dhariḥ and Lubnā, Jamīl and Buthaina, and other couples hardly less renowned, and whose experiences were no less charmingly heart-rending. A few of the more remote celebrities, such as Yūsuf and Zuleikhā, receive mention or furnish an anecdote, but the most of the material is taken from close at hand. Among the caliphs whose names now and then appear, Hārūn er-Rašīd plays a very insignificant rôle—a fact which speaks well for the comparative trustworthiness of the book. Stories of Bedouin life have a prominent place, and, like the others, are generally interesting and always well told.

Like the classical examples to which allusion has been made, the great majority of these anecdotes have a distinctly mournful

¹ See H. H., II, 437, and VI, 137.

tinge. They are histories of hopeless or unfortunate attachments, and end with a funeral. The ominous title of the book is thus fully justified. The author writes in the true spirit of the old theological dogma which tradition was inclined to ascribe to Mohammed himself: "He who dies as love's victim dies a martyr, and paradise is his portion." From this point of view, the book might be called a martyrology of an unusually interesting type. It does contain, to be sure, a great many stories and incidents which end in the happiest manner; but both the author's pious turn of mind and his classical taste led him to prefer those of the more somber hue. Another point in which the stories are truly classical is their general tone of propriety and respectability. So far as incident is concerned, many of them are lively enough, and unconventional enough, it is hardly necessary to say; but all are told with a reserve and a dignity which are never relaxed.

In its combination of poetry with prose, the book resembles the *Aghânî*. It is as truly an anthology of verse as of prose narrative. The proportion, too, is about the same as in the *Aghânî*, half poetry, half prose. As a specimen of pure literary Arabic, it ranks high, and deserves to be widely read by occidental scholars. The fact is to be remarked that for each one of the narratives, bits of verse, or scraps of anecdote a full chain of authorities is given, in the good old style which soon ceased to be practicable in such works. Moreover, as es-Sarrâj is a scholar addressing a cultured audience, he frequently introduces comments of his own which have considerable literary and historical interest.

Although much read in its own day and for some time after, the *مصارع العشاق* was ultimately supplanted by other works of the same class, some of which borrowed from it extensively, or even consisted in the main of abridged versions of it. Hence it happens that in modern times manuscripts of the book are extremely rare, and that it was hardly known even by name until the printed edition appeared, some twenty years ago. This modern print is a well-executed octavo of about four hundred pages, published in Constantinople (*Jawâ'ib Press*) in the year 1301 (1884 A. D.). It seems to have been based on a manuscript of very good quality, and its readings are generally satisfactory. The publication has remained nearly unknown in the Occident. I have never met with an allusion to the book, and in talking

with one of the highest authorities in the field of Arabic literature, a short time ago, I was surprised to find that he knew nothing of it.

But the particular feature of the book, as it now exists, to which I wish to call attention, is a remarkable lacuna in one of its narratives. It is in the story of the Young Spendthrift of Bagdad and his Singing-Girl, a tale which is familiar to all those who have read the *Thousand and One Nights*. From the middle of this tale a long passage has been omitted, the manner of the omission and the subsequent history of the defective text being the especially noticeable features. The place of the gap is the middle of a sentence, the two halves of which now seem to fit each other perfectly. There is neither anacolouthon nor grammatical irregularity, but it all reads smoothly from beginning to end. Moreover, by a singular coincidence the two halves of the accidentally created compound correspond in matter as well as in form. In either one the hero of the story is speaking in the first person and making mention of another man in whose company he happens to be. The text reads as follows (p. 382, top): فَلَمَّا صَرْنَا عِنْدَ كِلْوَادِي أَخْرَجَ الطَّعَامَ وَأَكَلَ هُوَ فَصَعِدْتُ وَجَلَسْتُ مَعَهُ
 وَدَبِرْتُ امْرَأَةً "So when we came opposite Kelwādha, food was brought, and he ate, and I went up and sat beside him, and took charge of his affairs." This certainly sounds like continuous narrative; but the pronoun of the third person in the two halves of the sentence refers to two altogether different men. The lacuna comes just after the word هُوَ. In what precedes, the hero is in a certain well-defined situation, while from this point onward he is in totally different surroundings, though the fact does not immediately appear. The words next following the break, "and I went up and sat beside him," happen to be perfectly suited to the scene which precedes, and one might even read on for a clause or two without realizing what a jump has been made. But the shock comes very soon; for whereas the reader had supposed the young man of Bagdad to be in a boat on the river, disguised as a common sailor, with his singing-girl (now the property of another man) almost within arm's reach, and the situation becoming more exciting every moment—he suddenly finds that the scene has changed, somehow, without warning; the hero is

apprenticed to a green-grocer in the city of Baṣra earning a dirhem a day, and in a fair way to marry the grocer's daughter! Evidently this is not a case of intentional abridgement. When it is observed that about one thousand words have been dropped at this point, the explanation of the matter is beyond doubt; a double leaf (four pages) fell out by accident, and the loss was not noticed.

Now, aside from the printed edition, two manuscripts of this work are known to western scholars, both of them in the British Museum.¹ I examined them with some care ten years ago. The one proved (contrary to the representation of the *Catalogue*) to be nothing more than a very meager abridgment of the work, and this particular story is lacking in it altogether. The other is a very old and fine codex which once belonged to Von Kremer. In this precisely *the same gap* is found which appears in the printed text. The only known copies of the book, then, have this defect. The Constantinople edition was not made from the Von Kremer manuscript, as comparison shows.

Fortunately, however, we are not yet at the end of our resources. The gap can be filled, and filled exactly, from another book, as I shall show. That which first led me to examine the *مصارع العشاق* was a theory of mine that it was the direct source of certain stories found in an anthology of el-Ghozālī, who lived some three hundred years later (†815 A. H. = 1412 A. D.).² The comparison has borne out the conjecture; the literary relation is of the very closest kind. There were, in fact, at least three such collections of good stories which derived more or less of their material from es-Sarrāj; namely, the *أسواق الأشواق* of el-Biqā'ī (†885 A. H. = 1480 A. D.), the *تزيين الاسواق* of Da'ūd el-Anṭakī (†1005 A. H. = 1596-97 A. D.), and the

¹For the numbers, see Brockelmann's *Arabische Literaturgeschichte*, Vol. I, p. 351.

²For a partial description of this anthology, entitled *مطالع البدرور في منازل السروور*, and of the stories mentioned, I may refer to my article in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. XVI (1893), pp. 43 *sqq.* The literature of this story of the Young Man of Bagdad is given on p. 44. To the list of the manuscripts of el-Ghozālī's book, given on p. 43, should be added Codex 3415 of the Bibliothèque Nationale. This manuscript, of which I have recently made a partial collation, is an important one. It is carefully written, and seems to belong to a line of literary transmission different from that represented by the other existing texts. It contains, for example, the word *رسول* which I supplied by conjecture in my edition of one of the stories (*loc. cit.*, p. 56, n. 12).

مطالع البدور of el-Ghozûlî. Of these, the first two are abridgments giving nearly everything in considerably shortened form; see, for example, the specimens printed by Kosegarten in his *Chrestomathy* (this story, pp. 22 *sqq.*), and compare his Preface, p. x *sq.* In el-Ghozûlî, on the other hand, only a few things are borrowed from es-Sarrâj, but these are transferred without change or loss. The dependence is undoubtedly direct, not through any intermediate work or works. The variant readings are only such slight verbal changes as inevitably arise, even in a very short time, in the manuscript transmission of such popular tales as these. Then—to go a step farther—some of these same stories were carried over into the *Thousand and One Nights* from el-Ghozûlî (not from es-Sarrâj), with but slight change. Here, in the subsequent history of the text, the transmission by successive copyists was much more careless, involving many small alterations and occasional omissions or additions; whence it happens that the text of the *Nights*, as we know it, is of little use to the makers of critical editions.

Whoever, then, wishes to see the story of the Young Man of Bagdad and his Singing-Girl in its oldest and most complete form must take the *Maşârî' al-'Uşşâq*, where the tale is given with all the apparatus of tradition, and on reaching the lacuna fill in from el-Ghozûlî. The following is an outline of the narrative, with the Arabic text of the latter book at the two margins of the lacuna:

The spendthrift hero is obliged to sell his *qaina*, who is thereupon bought by a rich merchant and carried on board a boat bound for Baṣra. The hero disguises himself as a boatman and embarks with them at the last moment. The merchant soon asks for music (*Ghoz.*, i, 189, l. 3):

فلما صار عند كلوانى اخرج
الطعام واكل هو [والجارية واكل الباقون على وسط الزلال واطعم
الملاحين ثم اقبل على الجارية الخ

The girl complies, but makes such doleful work of it that all festivity is brought to an end. Soon after, the young man of Bagdad makes himself known, and is most generously treated by the merchant, who gives him back his *qaina*. The ensuing celebration is unnecessarily thorough. As the boat touches at one of the banks, in the course of the night, the hero lands, falls into a drunken sleep, and the boat goes away without him, since the others, including the girl, are

all too intoxicated to notice his absence. He at last finds his way to Baṣra, but is penniless, and has no way of finding either the girl or the merchant. It is at this juncture that the grocer takes him into his shop (*Ghoz.*, i, 191, l. 4 *a f.*): فقال تعمل معي كل يوم بنصف درهم وطعامك وكسوتك وتضبط لي حساب دكاني فقلت له نعم قال لي اصعد فصعدت وخرت الرقعة وجلست معه ودبرت امرة وضبطت دخله وخرجه الخ Our hero accepts the position, and is prospered. He is saved by the grace of Allah from marrying the grocer's daughter. Some time later he hears news of the long-lost *qaina*, and makes his way to her just as she is digging a grave. The grave-digging is abandoned, and the reunited pair live together happily to the end of their days.